

A MOODLE SUCCESS STORY: SUPPORTING ON-LINE SURVEYS FOR STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING ACTIVITY

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Abstract

We report our positive three years experience in using and extending moodle for supporting on-line semestral surveys for student evaluation of the teaching activity in the Faculty of Mathematical, Physics and Natural Sciences (MPNS) at the University of Genova. Even though the overall process still needs some adjustments, Moodle has proved to be well suited for this aim; as a result, evaluation has been considerably enhanced in terms of response rates, data confidence, and required human resources.

Keywords - On-line student evaluation, moodle modules extension, data integration

1 INTRODUCTION

During the Academic Year (AY) 1999-2000 the University of Genova started a new student evaluation program consisting in semestral survey questionnaires proposed to students attending face-to-face classes, in accordance with the ministerial directives (Legge 370/99, art.1, comma 2). Since that time, the importance and influence of the outcome of student surveys on the evaluation of teaching have been constantly growing, with a corresponding increasing demand for enhancement of the overall collecting process to ensure better standards in terms of response rates and data confidence. To achieve these primary aims, the Parity Commission (PC) of the MPNS Faculty decided to switch from a manual to an on-line collecting procedure during the AY 2008-'09, by taking advantage of AulaWeb, the Moodle-based Web Learning platform used in our University since 2005.

2 MOODLE FEEDBACK MODULE

Moodle 2.0 provides three standard modules expressly designed for gathering student feedbacks: Survey, Feedback and Questionnaire. Survey provides only a handful of selectable pre-written surveys, and does not allow users to write their own questions, therefore it is not suitable for managing surveys for student evaluation of teaching. On the other hand, both the Feedback and the Questionnaire modules can be used for this aim, with the only difference that the former module is smaller in scope, but also simpler to use. However, in our case we had no options since AulaWeb supports only the Feedback module.

The Feedback module offers some useful basic features for creating and customizing a survey to gather students opinions. Among them, the most interesting ones for our specific aim are the following: anonymous responses, no multiple submissions by the same user, hidden summary results, several supported question types, and good support for questions editing. In particular, the module allows users to easily import and export templates in .xml format, and to change them with a user-friendly interface.

3 EXTENSIONS TO THE MOODLE FEEDBACK MODULE

Even though the Feedback module was a good starting point for setting-up the on-line survey, we had to face several problems not solvable without extending its functionalities. Whereas Moodle categories and courses allow a satisfactory structuring of the Web page to make questionnaires easily accessible, automatically populating the database has been an important concern, since manual insertion of questionnaires would have been too burdensome, given the high numbers of involved courses (more than 200). Similar considerations apply for exporting collected responses into Excel files, a feature provided by the module but only on a per questionnaire basis. To overcome these problems the functionality of the module has been extended to support course templates that can be imported and exported in .xml format, and edited similarly as happens for question templates.

Another important extension concerns the integration of the module with the University student database; in this way several advanced functionalities could be implemented: automatic extraction of course templates, checking of the personal student data, and of the correct correspondence between the completed questionnaires and the attended classes.

4 CONCLUSION

The modular construction of Moodle and its strong support for interoperability have allowed us to extend the functionality of the Feedback module rather easily to successfully implement on-line surveys for student evaluation of the teaching activity (see Fig. 1). The switch from a manual to an on-line collecting procedure has been considerably enhanced the evaluation process in terms of response rates, data confidence, and required human resources.

Inglese FCE (corso intensivo)(43967) (6 CFU)

Organizzazione dell'insegnamento

Le modalità di esame sono state definite in modo chiaro?

Gli orari di svolgimento dell'attività didattica sono rispettati?

Il personale docente è effettivamente reperibile per chiarimenti e spiegazioni?

Gli argomenti delle lezioni sono aderenti e conformi al programma previsto?

L'insegnamento è integrato con gli altri insegnamenti?

Scegli tra le seguenti opzioni

☐ Decisamente NO

☐ Più NO che SI

☐ Più SI che NO

☐ Decisamente SI

Scegli tra le seguenti opzioni

☐ Decisamente NO

☐ Più NO che SI

☐ Più SI che NO

☐ Decisamente SI

Scegli tra le seguenti opzioni

☐ Decisamente NO

☐ Più NO che SI

☐ Più SI che NO

☐ Decisamente SI

Scegli tra le seguenti opzioni

☐ Decisamente NO

☐ Più NO che SI

☐ Più SI che NO

☐ Decisamente SI

Scegli tra le seguenti opzioni

☐ Decisamente NO

☐ Più NO che SI

☐ Più SI che NO

☐ Decisamente SI

Fig. 1: A snapshot of the first part of an on-line questionnaire